Springboards We Would Like to See

Editorial By Benjamin E. Sones

A few weeks back we did a feature on upcoming Springboard modules for the Handspring Visor. There is no questioning the fact that hardware developers have finally started to embrace what Handspring obviously hopes will become the standard for expansion in Palm devices. The recent PC Expo in New York City highlighted a collection of upcoming Springboards that should bring a smile to the face of any Visor owner, such as Novatel's Minstrel S wireless cellular modem, Innogear's MiniJam MP3 player, and more GPS devices than you could shake a satellite at. Still, hardware and software developers have really only scratched the surface—there are still many potential ideas that have yet to be explored.

> **"Built right into the back of the Visor is a slot that could potentially make it into the Palm equivalent of Nintendo's GameBoy…"**

Software Springboards are one of the most obvious areas that could use some improvement. Where are all the games? Built right into the back of the Visor is a slot that could potentially make it into the Palm equivalent of Nintendo's GameBoy… but we will need a few games other than Tiger Woods PGA TOUR Golf to make that a reality. Handspring needs to take an active role in encouraging game developers to make games for their platform. Sure, the numbers may seem small now to developers with console experience, but the Palm market is growing, and Handspring is growing with it. The cost of entry is certainly attractive—most GameBoy games take well under a year to make.

Space-intensive reference software is also a good candidate for Springboard conversion. Take advantage of the Visor's portability and give us *Hugh Johnson's Pocket…* er… *Palm Guide to Wine*, a comprehensive reference that you could carry to the wine shop in your pocket. Or a Leonard Maltin movie review database for trips to the video store. Or how about the *Consumer Reports* yearly product guide in Springboard format?

Speaking of space, how long will it be before someone decides to stick one of IBM's microdrives inside a Springboard module? 8 or 16 MB of memory may be fine for now, but everyone needs more space eventually. How about a 170 MB Springboard memory module? Or a 340 MB one? If you don't think you will ever need that much memory, just wait until you get your wireless cellular modem.

The Visor may not have a sound chip, but is there any reason why somebody couldn't make a Springboard sound module? As long as we are getting *really* esoteric, let's ask for a voice-recognition Springboard module as well.

All right, those last two are probably a few years (and a few Visor iterations) away from being possible (voice recognition, at least, requires a pretty hefty processor and ample storage space—two things that are a bit outside of the Visor's domain). But we can always dream…

Review **PortaFish** *$4.99, Eruptor, www.eruptor.com*

Do virtual pets really bother you? When you see someone caring for their digital critter, are you overcome with an irresistible urge to rip it from their hands, hurl it to the ground, and jump up and down on it for a good fifteen minutes? If so, then Eruptor's (www.eruptor.com) PortaFish may be just the sort of therapy that you need.

PortaFish is a pet digital guppy. Or perhaps a piranha. It's really somewhat difficult to tell for certain. You will have to feed your PortaFish on a daily basis, and you will also have to scoop up his droppings.
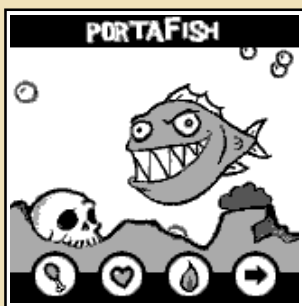
See? Isn't this fun?

Of course when you get too tired of actually caring for your PortaFish, you can always drop a barrel of nuclear waste into his tank and watch him grow a third eye. If you get really mad at him, you can boil the water in his tank.

It's tough to actually kill the PortaFish, and that's probably a good thing, since you'll probably spend most of your time torturing the poor little critter. It's tough to put a price on that kind of entertainment (but all things considered, five bucks seems about right).
—*Benjamin E. Sones*

News

Sony Goes Palm
Sony announced the launch of its Palm OS-based "Personal Entertainment Organizer," slated to hit the Japanese market in September and then migrate over to the US market later this year. Features include video playback, still picture viewing, and internet connectivity through a cellular phone connector.

Palm Targets Children
Palm Inc. announced that it will release a lower-priced version of the Palm Pilot to the Japanese market later this year in an attempt to capture the teen-aged market. The new device would retail for 25,000 yen (about $230 US), roughly half the price of current Palm models.

Handspring Beats Forecast
Handspring announced on Thursday that their losses were less than expected in their first quarter as a publicly traded company. On a per share basis, the quarterly loss was 13 cents. Analysts had expected a loss of 19 cents a share, according to First Call/Thomson Financial.

New Software

TealPaint 4.44
TealPoint Software announced a new version of their paint program TealPaint this week. The new version offers support for 4- and 16-shade grayscale on any device using the Palm OS version 3.5. *www.tealpoint.com*

Pocket Palate
Still thirsty for wine software? Extended Technology Systems has a little program called Pocket Palate that keeps track of wines, tasting notes, and wineries. *www.exts.com*

eAbuse
If you are the sort of person who never has a good insult handy when you need one, you might want to check out eTree Inc.'s eAbuse. It offers up burns in three flavors—Modern, Terse, and Traditional. Best of all, it's free. *www.etree.com*